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MM71/0812

EXAMINER  
REICHARD, D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2831	

DATE MAILED: 08/12/98

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks

## Office Action Summary

Application No. <b>08/902,849</b>	Applicant(s) <b>Maltby et al.</b>
Examiner <b>Dean Reichard</b>	Group Art Unit <b>2831</b>

Responsive to communication(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_

This action is **FINAL**.

Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

A shortened statutory period for response to this action is set to expire 3 month(s), or thirty days, whichever is longer, from the mailing date of this communication. Failure to respond within the period for response will cause the application to become abandoned. (35 U.S.C. § 133). Extensions of time may be obtained under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a).

### Disposition of Claims

Claim(s) 1-45 is/are pending in the application.

Of the above, claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.

Claim(s) 1 and 3-45 is/are rejected.

Claim(s) 2 and misnumbered claims 32-46, which have been renumbered as 31-45 is/are objected to.

Claims \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction or election requirement.

### Application Papers

See the attached Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948.

The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to by the Examiner.

The proposed drawing correction, filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is  approved  disapproved.

The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d).

All  Some\*  None of the CERTIFIED copies of the priority documents have been

received.

received in Application No. (Series Code/Serial Number) \_\_\_\_\_.

received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\*Certified copies not received: \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).

### Attachment(s)

Notice of References Cited, PTO-892

Information Disclosure Statement(s), PTO-1449, Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Summary, PTO-413

Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948

Notice of Informal Patent Application, PTO-152

--- SEE OFFICE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES ---

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## **DETAILED ACTION**

### *Oath/Declaration*

1. The specification states at page 1 lines 2 and 3 that this application is a continuation-in-part of Application Serial No. 08/775,382, but there is no mention of Application Serial No. 08/775,382 in the declaration.

### *Specification*

2. The abstract of the disclosure is objected to because of the use therein of legal phraseology (“comprises” at lines 13 and 21, Examiner suggests “includes” instead). Correction is required. See MPEP § 608.01(b). Further, at line 6 of the abstract, “including” should be changed to “includes” to correct a grammatical error.

3. The lengthy specification has not been checked to the extent necessary to determine the presence of all possible minor errors. Applicant's cooperation is requested in correcting any errors of which applicant may become aware in the specification.

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***Claim Objections***

4. The numbering of claims is not accordance with 37 CFR 1.126 which requires the original numbering of the claims to be preserved throughout the prosecution. When claims are canceled, the remaining claims must not be renumbered. When new claims are presented, they must be numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered claims previously presented (whether entered or not).

Misnumbered claims 32-46 have been renumbered as claims 31-45.

5. Claim 28 is objected to because of the following informalities: at claim 28 line 2, "being" should be changed to "is" to correct a grammatical error. Appropriate correction is required.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

6. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

7. Claims 9, 10, 12-21, 23, 24, 30, 35, 36, 42, and 44 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

At claim 9 line 2, "corresponding to" is confusing, since the face of the receptacle includes the face of the at least one socket.

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At claim 10 line 2, "the indented line" lacks the proper antecedent basis.

At claim 12 lines 16 and 17, "the at least one securing aperture" lacks antecedent basis.

At claim 18 line 2, "corresponding to" is confusing, since the face of the receptacle includes the face of the at least one socket.

At claim 23 line 2, "from the front surface" is confusing, since the first region is a part of the front surface.

At claim 24 line 2, "from the front surface" is confusing, since the first region is a part of the front surface.

At claim 30 line 2, "corresponding to" is confusing, since the face of the receptacle includes the face of the receptacle includes the face of the at least one socket.

At claim 35 line 2, "from the front surface" is confusing, since the first region is a part of the front surface.

At claim 36 line 2, "from the front surface" is confusing, since the first region is a part of the front surface.

At claim 42 line 2, "corresponding to" is confusing, since the face of the receptacle includes the face of the receptacle includes the face of the at least one socket.

At claim 42 lines 5 and 6, "the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle" lacks antecedent basis.

At claim 44 lines 4 and 5, "the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle" lacks antecedent basis.

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Any further rejections of, or indications of the allowability of, any of claims 9, 10, 12-21, 23, 24, 25, 30, 35, 36, 42, and 44 in this Office action are based on claims 9, 10, 12-21, 23, 24, 30, 35, 36, 42, and 44 as they are understood by the examiner.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

8. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless --

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

9. Claims 22, 25, 26, 28-34, 37, 38, and 40-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Hayman.

Regarding claim 22, Hayman discloses a cover plate for covering an electrical outlet, the electrical outlet including a receptacle having at least one socket and at least one securing aperture for receiving a securing device, each of the at least one socket including a face and a plurality of blade apertures for receiving plug blades, the cover plate comprising:

a front surface for facing outwardly from the electrical outlet and externally relative to the cover plate and a back surface facing toward the electrical outlet;

a plurality of blade apertures extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the blade apertures are in substantial alignment with

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the at least two blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the plug blades; and

at least one securing aperture extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the at least one securing aperture is in substantial alignment with a corresponding one of the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the securing device and fixedly positioning the cover plate with respect to the receptacle;

the front surface of the cover plate containing a first (central) region substantially rectangular in shape disposed about and including the blade apertures and the at least one securing aperture and a second (outer) region which contains the portion of the front surface other than the first region, the front surface having a discontinuity between the first and second regions, the first region otherwise being continuous, having uniform topography, and being free of any other apertures, and the second region otherwise being continuous, having uniform topography, and being free of any apertures.

All of these features can be seen in Hayman's figure 1, except for the back surface of the cover plate which can be seen, for example, facing to the right in Hayman's figure 3 and facing downwardly in Hayman's figure 4.

Re claim 25, note that in the cover plate disclosed by Hayman, each of the first (central) and second (outer) regions of the front surface is substantially planar.

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Re claim 26, note that a substantial portion of Hayman's second (outer) region is substantially planar.

Re claims 28 and 32, Hayman's figures 3 and 4 show that a portion of the back surface is shaped to directly contact and be substantially flush with the face of the at least one socket of the associated receptacle, whether or not the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 29, note that Hayman's front surface covers the entire face of the at least one socket except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 30, note that Hayman's front surface is sized to cover the entire face portion of its associated receptacle, which includes the face of the at least one socket, except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket and the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 31, note that each of Hayman's first (central) and second (outer) regions is substantially smooth.

Re claim 33, note that the electrical outlet over which Hayman's cover plate is to be installed inherently is disposed in a hole, and the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is sized to cover the entire hole except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket and the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

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Re claim 34, Hayman discloses a cover plate for covering an electrical outlet, the electrical outlet including a receptacle having at least one socket, each of the at least one socket including a face and a plurality of blade apertures for receiving plug blades, the cover plate comprising;

a front surface for facing outwardly from the electrical outlet and externally relative to the cover plate and a back surface facing toward the electrical outlet;

a plurality of blade apertures extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the blade apertures are in substantial alignment with the at least two blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the plug blades;

the front surface of the cover plate containing a first (central) region substantially rectangular in shape disposed about and including the blade apertures and a second (outer) region which contains the portion of the front surface other than the first region, the front surface having a discontinuity between the first and second regions, the first region otherwise being continuous, having uniform topography, and being free of any other apertures, and the second region otherwise being continuous, having uniform topography, and being free of any apertures.

All of these features can be seen in Hayman's figure 1, except for the back surface of the cover plate which can be seen, for example, facing to the right in Hayman's figure 3 and facing downwardly in Hayman's figure 4.

Re claim 37, note that each of the first (central) and second (outer) regions of Hayman's front surface is substantially planar.

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Re claim 38, note that a substantial portion of Hayman's second (outer) region is substantially planar.

Re claim 40, Hayman's figures 3 and 4 show that a portion of the back surface is shaped to directly contact and be substantially flush with the face of the at least one socket of the associated receptacle.

Re claim 41, note that the front surface of Hayman's cover plate covers the entire face of the at least one socket except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 42, note that Hayman's front surface is sized to cover the entire face portion of its associated receptacle, which includes the face of the at least one socket, except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 43, note that each of Hayman's first (central) and second (outer) regions is substantially smooth.

Re claim 44, note that the electrical outlet over which Hayman's cover plate is to be installed inherently is disposed in a hole, and the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is sized to cover the entire hole except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 45, Hayman discloses a cover plate for covering an electrical outlet, the electrical outlet including a receptacle having at least one socket and at least one securing aperture for

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receiving a securing device, each of the at least one socket including a face and a plurality of blade apertures for receiving plug blades, the cover plate comprising:

    a front surface for facing outwardly from the electrical outlet and externally relative to the cover plate and a back surface facing toward the electrical outlet;

    a plurality of blade apertures extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the blade apertures are in substantial alignment with the at least two blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the plug blades; and

    at least one securing aperture extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the at least one securing aperture is in substantial alignment with a corresponding one of the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the securing device and fixedly positioning the cover plate with respect to the receptacle;

    the front surface of the cover plate containing a first (central) region substantially rectangular in shape disposed about and including the blade apertures and the at least one securing aperture and a second (outer) region which contains the portion of the front surface other than the first region, the front surface having a discontinuity between the first and second regions.

    All of these features can be seen in Hayman's figure 1, except for the back surface of the cover plate which can be seen, for example, facing to the right in Hayman's figure 3 and facing downwardly in Hayman's figure 4.

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***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

10. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103© and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

11. Claims 1, 3-6, 8-12, and 14-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayman.

Re claim 1, Hayman discloses a cover plate for covering an electrical outlet, the electrical outlet including a receptacle having at least one socket and at least one securing aperture for receiving a securing device, each of the at least one socket including a face and a plurality of blade apertures for receiving plug blades, the cover plate comprising:

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a front surface for facing outwardly from the electrical outlet and externally relative to the cover plate and a back surface facing toward the electrical outlet;

a plurality of blade apertures extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the blade apertures are in substantial alignment with the at least two blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the plug blades; and

at least one securing aperture extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the at least one securing aperture is in substantial alignment with a corresponding one of the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the securing device and fixedly positioning the cover plate with respect to the receptacle;

the front surface of the cover plate containing a line extending substantially in a rectangle around the blade apertures and the at least one securing aperture, the front surface otherwise being continuous, and being free of any other apertures;

the cover plate being a single component and being solid except for the blade apertures and the at least one securing aperture.

Hayman lacks the line being a single line, and the front surface otherwise having uniform topography, since Hayman discloses a plurality of lines and pronounced elevations as can be seen in Hayman's figures 1 and 4. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to omit all but a single one of the lines and the pronounced

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elevations disclosed by Hayman, since it has been held that omission of an element and its function (the function of the extra lines and the pronounced elevations in Hayman is merely to provide a specific appearance) in a combination where the remaining elements perform the same functions as before involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Karlson*, 136 USPQ 184.

Re claim 3, note that the line disclosed by Hayman is a raised line raised relative to the remainder of the front surface. See for example figure 4 in Hayman.

Re claim 4, note that the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is substantially planar.

Re claim 5, note that a substantial portion of the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is substantially planar.

Re claim 6, Hayman's figures 3 and 4 show that a portion of the back surface is shaped to directly contact and be substantially flush with the face of the at least one socket of the associated receptacle.

Re claim 8, note that the front surface of Hayman's cover plate covers the entire face of the at least one socket except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 9, note that Hayman's front surface is sized to cover the entire face portion of its associated receptacle, which includes the face of the at least one socket, except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket and the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 10, note that Hayman's front surface other than the line is substantially smooth.

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Re claim 11, note that the electrical outlet over which Hayman's cover plate is to be installed inherently is disposed in a hole, and the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is sized to cover the entire hole except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket and the at least one securing aperture of the receptacle when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 12, Hayman discloses a cover plate for covering an electrical outlet, the electrical outlet including a receptacle having at least one socket, each of the at least one socket including a face and a plurality of blade apertures for receiving plug blades, the cover plate comprising:

    a front surface for facing outwardly from the electrical outlet and externally relative to the cover plate and a back surface for facing toward the electrical outlet;

    a plurality of blade apertures extending through the cover plate through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate so the blade apertures are in substantial alignment with the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the plug blades;

    the front surface of the cover plate containing a line extending substantially in a rectangle around the blade apertures, the front surface otherwise being continuous;

    the cover plate being a single component and being solid except for the blade apertures and a securing aperture.

Hayman lacks the line being a single line, and the front surface otherwise having uniform topography and a freedom of any other apertures, since Hayman discloses a plurality of lines, pronounced elevations, and a securing aperture, as can be seen in Hayman's figures 1 and 4. It

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would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to omit all but a single one of the lines, the pronounced elevations, and the securing aperture disclosed by Hayman, since it has been held that omission of an element and its function (the function of the extra lines and the pronounced elevations in Hayman is merely to provide a specific appearance, and the securing function of the securing aperture could be accomplished in other ways such as by an interference or snap fit) in a combination where the remaining elements perform the same functions as before involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Karlson*, 136 USPQ 184.

Re claim 14, note that the line disclosed by Hayman is a raised line raised relative to the remainder of the front surface.

Re claim 15, note that a substantial portion of the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is substantially planar.

Re claims 16 and 17, note that the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is sized to cover the entire face of the at least one socket except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket, whether or not the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 18, note that Hayman's front surface is sized to cover the entire face portion of its associated receptacle, which includes the face of the at least one socket, except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 19, note that the front surface of Hayman's front surface other than the line is substantially smooth.

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Re claim 20, Hayman's figures 3 and 4 show that a portion of the back surface is shaped to directly contact and be substantially flush with the face of the at least one socket of the associated receptacle.

Re claim 21, note that the electrical outlet over which Hayman's cover plate is to be installed inherently is disposed in a hole, and the front surface of Hayman's cover plate is sized to cover the entire hole except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

12. Claims 12, 13, 15-19, and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dierenbach et al.

Re claim 12, Dierenbach et al. disclose a cover plate 172,136 for covering an electrical outlet, the electrical outlet including a receptacle 100 having at least one socket 102, each of the at least one socket including a face and a plurality of blade apertures for receiving plug blades, the cover plate comprising:

a front surface for facing outwardly from the electrical outlet and externally relative to the cover plate and a back surface for facing toward the electrical outlet;

a plurality of blade apertures a-f extending through the cover plate 172,136 through the front and back surfaces and positioned in the cover plate 172,136 so the blade apertures are in substantial alignment with the blade apertures of the at least one socket 102 when the cover plate 172,136 is affixed to the electrical outlet for receiving the plug blades;

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the front surface of the cover plate containing a single line (the interface between elements 172 and 136) extending substantially in a rectangle around the blade apertures a-f, the front surface other wise being continuous, having uniform topography, and being free of any other apertures;

the cover plate being two components (172 and 136) and being solid except for the blade apertures.

Dierenbach et al. lack the cover plate being a single component. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to make elements 172 and 136 of the Dierenbach et al.'s cover plate integral with one another, since it has been held that forming in one piece an article which has formerly been formed in two pieces and put together involves only routine skill in the art. *Howard v. Detroit Stove Works*, 150 U.S. 164 (1893).

Re claim 13, note that the line between Dierenbach et al.'s elements 172 and 136 comprises an indented line indented relative to the remainder of the front surface.

Re claim 15, note that a substantial portion of the front surface of Dierenbach et al.'s cover plate 172,136 is substantially planar.

Re claims 16 and 17, note that the front surface of Dierenbach et al.'s cover plate 172,136 is sized to cover the entire face of the at least one socket 102 except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket 102, whether or not the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

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Re claim 18, note that Dierenbach et al.'s front surface is sized to cover the entire face portion of its associated receptacle 100, which includes the face of the at least one socket 102, except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket 102 when the cover plate 172,136 is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Re claim 19, note that the front surface of Dierenbach et al.'s front surface other than the line between elements 172 and 136 is substantially smooth.

Re claim 21, note that the electrical outlet over which Dierenbach et al.'s cover plate is to be installed inherently is disposed in a hole, and the front surface of Dierenbach et al.'s cover plate is sized to cover the entire hole except for the blade apertures of the at least one socket 102 when the cover plate 172,136 is affixed to the electrical outlet.

13. Claims 7, 27, and 39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayman in view of Allen.

*Overcome  
by arguments  
(at top of page 22)* Re claims 7, 27, and 39, Hayman discloses or renders obvious the invention substantially as claimed, including the back surface including at least one thinned receiving area (shown in figures 3 and 4 in Hayman) sized to receive the at least one socket of the receptacle such that the at least one receiving area receives the at least one socket when the cover plate is affixed to the electrical outlet.

Hayman lacks the receiving area mating to the at least one socket. This would require a snug fit.

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Allen teaches the use of receiving areas 17 in an outlet cover which are sized to fit snugly over sockets of an associated outlet in order to firmly hold the cover in place over the outlet.

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to form the receiving area on the back surface of Hayman's cover plate with a size and shape to snugly receive the at least one socket of the associated receptacle in view of the teaching of Allen in order to hold the cover plate of Hayman in place over the associated electrical outlet.

14. Claim 36 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayman in view of Warner.

Hayman discloses all of the claimed features except for the first region being recesses inwardly relative to the second region.

Warner teaches the use of a recessed region surrounding blade apertures of a cover plate in order to improve the safety of the cover plate and its associated receptacle. See for example column 4 lines 20-25 in Warner.

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to recess the first (central) region of Hayman's cover plate, at least in the area of its blade apertures relative to the second (outer) region in order to improve the safety of the cover plate and its associated receptacle in view of the teaching of Warner.

***Allowable Subject Matter***

15. Claim 2 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

16. Claims 23, 24, and 35 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

17. The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter:

The primary reason for the indication of the allowability of claim 2 is the inclusion therein, in combination as currently claimed, of the limitation of the line comprising an indented line which extends around the blade apertures and the at least one securing aperture and is indented relative to the remainder of the front surface. This limitation was found in claim 2 and is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record, alone or in combination.

The primary reason for the indication of the allowability of claim 23 is the inclusion therein, in combination as currently claimed, of the limitation of the first region being elevated outwardly relative to the second region. This limitation was found in claim 23 and is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record, alone or in combination.

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The primary reasons for the indication of the allowability of claim 24 are the inclusion therein, in combination as currently claimed, of the limitations of the first region including both the blade apertures and the at least one securing aperture, and the first region being recessed inwardly relative to the second region. These limitations were found in claim 24 and are neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record, alone or in combination.

The primary reason for the indication of the allowability of claim 35 is the inclusion therein, in combination as currently claimed, of the limitation of the first region being elevated outwardly relative to the second region. This limitation was found in claim 35 and is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record, alone or in combination.

***Closing***

18. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Chen is cited to show a cover plate with recessed regions on its front surface.

Gaines et al. are cited to show a cover plate with a discontinuity on its front surface.

Goodridge is cited to show cover plate with a portion of its back surface is shaped to directly contact and be substantially flush with the face of at least one socket.

Crabtree et al. are cited to show a cover plate having first and second regions

Griffin is cited to show a cover plate having openings only for plug blades and fasteners.

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19. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Dean A. Reichard whose telephone number is (703) 308-3682. The examiner can normally be reached on Mondays-Thursdays from 6:30am to 5:00pm, EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Kristine Kincaid, can be reached on (703) 308-0640. The fax phone number for this Group is (703) 305-3431.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-1782.

DR 8-7-98  
Reichard:dar  
August 7, 1998

*Dean A. Reichard 8-7-98*  
Dean A. Reichard  
Primary Examiner